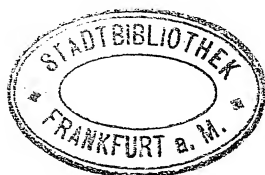


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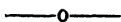
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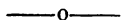
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BY

REV. E. L. LANGSTON, M.A.,

*Author of "Ominous Days," "Christ and the Apostate
Church," &c.*



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PREFACE.

The Rev. E. L. Langston has written the first three chapters and thus has brought up to date the last four chapters written by the late Canon Hoare.

INTRODUCTION.

This is really a remarkable little book in the light of the present situation on the Continent and the near East.

The late Rev. Canon E. Hoare, of Tunbridge wells, certainly had a wonderful insight into the Prophetic Scriptures, as is evidenced in his Bible Reading, dealing with the decline of the Ottoman Power and the development of a Confederacy of Nations in the North of Europe.

The last chapter dealing with the possibilities of happenings in Russia are of course yet future ; but, there is every indication that they are likely to come to pass. Whoever is going to possess or have the protectorship over Palestine after this war is over, none can yet foretell.

There is every likelihood of Great Britain having some say in the matter.

The suggestions, however, of the late Canon Hoare with regard to the future of that vast Empire and its attitude towards Palestine need to be weighed very carefully in the light of present day developments.

Russia recently certainly would have liked to possess the suzerainty over the Holy Land.

CHAPTER I.

RUSSIA AND PREPARATIONS FOR RESTORATION.

For centuries past now millions of devotees of the Orthodox Church have made pilgrimages to the Sacred Shrines of the Holy Land and especially to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Palestine is written very deeply on the hearts of religious Russia, and there is no doubt there is no land under the sun they would like to possess than the Holy Land. Turkey has forfeited her claim to possess it; Germany has been doing her utmost for the past twenty years to gain interest in that area; France has no real interest in the country except perhaps she would like to have some authority in the future developments of Syria; England holds no property in the land except through her Missionary Societies. It is quite a question whether it would be wise for our Government to hold suzerainty over this disputed land. For, Palestine is a Holy Land to all Jews, Moslems and Christians, and the

Power that holds sway over Palestine cannot but be compromised and possibly unsettled owing to the many conflicting religious sentiments with regard to its sacred sites and scenes. It certainly does seem wiser to allow the Jews now to go back to their own land, develop it along their own lines, and with their own wealth establish it as a Jewish State. In connection with such possible developments it is interesting to notice what the Bible has to say with regard to the return of the Jews to that land.

First of all, there is the promise of a Restoration given in Is. xi. 11-12. :—

“It shall come to pass *in that day*, that the LORD shall set His Hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall remain from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea ; and He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

This restoration of the Jews to their land, however, seems to be predicted to take place in a twofold manner, viz. :—

1. A Partial Restoration.

2. A Wholesale Restoration.

1. A PARTIAL RESTORATION.

Is. xxvii. 12. “Ye shall be gathered, one by one, O ye Children of Israel.”

Jer. iii. 14. “I will take of you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.”

Has not this been partially fulfilled already as a result of the Zionist movement ?

There are seven to eight million Jews in Eastern Europe, the large majority of whom still live in conditions of political outlawry and physical distress.

The Jews of the West of Europe and America number about four million. These, though living in the lands of freedom, are either generally socially ostracised or slowly becoming absorbed into the nations where they dwell. More than half the Jews in the world are strongly orthodox, and the rest, on account of the influence of civilisation and education, are

leaving orthodox Judaism, and swelling the ranks of infidelity and materialism.

The Zionist leaders of to-day are awake to both these painful facts, and realise that if their race is to be continued with all its racial qualities and abilities, they must be taken out of their present environment and planted in a land of their own.

In the Russian Pale of Settlement there were six million, of whom six per cent were merchants, professional men, and shopkeepers ; but the rest were herded together in a few hundred towns, often living under the most filthy and revolting conditions, making a pitiable livelihood as petty traders and artisans. They were prohibited from buying, renting, and even tilling the land, having been forbidden to enter the civil service, and were restricted in the adoption of professions. Their children could not form more than ten per cent. of the pupils of the government schools, nor more than five per cent. of the students of the Universities ; having been deprived of the rights of citizenship, yet they had to pay taxes and serve in the army. At the

same time, if they would be free from molestation they were compelled to bribe the police for protection. Any moment, at the caprice of some official, they were turned out of house and home, business and profession, on some trumpery plea or suspicion. Also, when the religious fanatics of the Greek or Roman Church were stirred up, which happened generally at the Passover season, there was often serious riot, and sometimes a horrible massacre.

In Roumania, their condition, if possible, was even more aggravated than in Russia.

The effects of this continued oppression upon these seven million Jews of Eastern Europe had set into motion a tide of emigration which flowed unceasingly to all parts of the world, especially to America. Within the last twenty-five years nearly two million Jews have left Eastern Europe, which for centuries had been the home of their fathers. This exodus of refugees is as large as that of the days of Pharaoh.

Russia is most anxious to get rid of the Jews in her realm; the question is, to what country shall they go?

The lands of the West are not nearly

so hospitable to the alien—which too often means Jew—as of old. The growth of social and economic troubles in the West of Europe, England, and America, has seriously hindered emigration of Jews into these countries, all of which demand that the alien should be in good health, and have sums of money varying from £4 to £20 in his pocket; also he must be able to give proof that he can support himself from the moment he lands. Consequently many thousand refugees, after having sold up their all, have been turned back from ports in England, America, and South Africa. What is to be the solution of their racial problem?

The condition of life in Russia is becoming more and more intolerable. To these sufferers Zionism offers the hope of a land where they will be able to till the soil of their forefathers in peace, where they will be able to live “every man under his vine and under his fig tree.”

The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a legally secured home in Palestine.

In order to attain this object the Zionist

congress adopted the following means :—

- 1.—The promotion of the settlement in Palestine of Jewish agriculturists, handicraftsmen, industrialists, and professional men.
- 2.—The federation and association of entire Jewry by means of local and general institutions conformably to the local laws.
- 3 —The strengthening of Jewish sentiment and national consciousness.
- 4.—The procuring of such government sanctions as are necessary for achieving the object of Zionism.

This programme was adopted with great enthusiasm in 1897, but after the death of Dr. Herzl, Zionism received many checks, that for a time crippled its operations. Wealthy Jews have seldom given it real support. The present condition of Zionism, whilst being somewhat chaotic in its organisation, owing to the independent character of the Jew, is possibly more rosy than it has ever been.

WHAT HAS ZIONISM DONE ?

(a) *Jerusalem*, thirty-five years ago, had a population of about 24,000 people,

of whom some four thousand were Jews. Before the war, in 1914, Jerusalem had a population of about 80,000, of whom 65,000 were Jews. That is to say, for the first time since the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, it became once again a Jewish city; about four-fifths of its population being Jewish. This has mainly been brought about during the past fifteen years.

(b) It is interesting to notice that when the Russian Government passed the cruel May Laws in 1881, compelling all Jews dwelling in the Empire to settle down in the S.W. corner—the Jewish Pale of Settlement—she was helping to fulfil the prophēcy “I will bring them from the north country” (Jer. xxxi. 8). “Ho! ho! flee from the land of the north” (Zech. ii. 6).

Practically all students of prophecy have considered the “land of the north” to be the Russian Empire, but that covers a vast expanse. By this comparatively recent action of the Russian Government, God has allowed “the land of the north” to be more clearly defined; for the Pale of Settlement, where there are now about

six million Jews, is almost due North of Palestine.

(c) The attitude of Turkey.

Eighteen years ago the Ottoman Government was distinctly hostile to the Zionists, and resisted to the utmost their desire to buy up land in Palestine for the purpose of settling down there. The wealthy Jews ridiculed the idea of the Zionist programme, confidently stating that the Turk would never allow the Jew to settle down in the Holy Land.

Dr. Herzl devoted himself from the very first with all his wonderful enthusiasm and personality to diplomatic negotiations with the Turkish Government. He tried to enlist the sympathy and support of all the great Powers. To this end he interviewed the Emperor of Germany; and the King of Italy. He went to Petrograd to plead for the Zionists freedom of action. He also had several interviews with the late Sultan of Turkey (Abdul Hamid), and received from him many encouragements.

With the rise of the Young Turk party, the aspirations and aims of Zionism have certainly been brighter. The Young Turk

party has given the Jews the privilege of entering into the area of the Dome of the Rock, where both Solomon's and Herod's Temples once stood. For nearly nineteen centuries this privilege has been denied, and if a Jew had dared to go within this sacred spot up till a few years ago, he might have been shot dead by the Turkish soldiers.

During the past few years there have been a series of remarkable edicts issued by the Ulema Council at Cairo (the Ulema Council is the highest ecclesiastical authority in Islam) to the effect that Moslems, Christians, and Jews worship the same God, and that therefore they have a right to a seat in Paradise. They urge that all true followers of the Prophet should practise equality and fraternity with Christians and Jews. By no people in the world was the establishment of a constitutional government in Turkey greeted with such enthusiasm as by the Jews, especially the Zionists. Undoubtedly, this revolution has helped the cause of Zionism considerably.

The Jerusalem correspondent of the

Daily Mail, January 17th, 1910, wrote thus :—

“ The proclamation of the Constitution in Turkey has thrown open the doors of Palestine to the incoming Jews from all parts of the world. In Jerusalem alone four-fifths of the population (100,000) now belong to the Jewish faith, while at Jaffa, Tiberias, Safed, and Haifa (Mount Carmel), Jews are reckoned by tens of thousands. Almost the whole of the extensive plain of Esdraelon has been bought up by them. Their prosperous colonies spread from Dan to Beersheba, and even further south to the outskirts of Egypt. Thousands have escaped from Persia to find shelter and protection in the Holy Land, while every ship from Odessa carries hundreds of them. The Jordan Valley, once the property of the ex-Sultan Abdul Hamid, has been eagerly sought after by Jewish capitalists and syndicates. The Zionists, whose agents have been distributed all over the land, have bought up the rich properties of the Mohammedan Effendis, whose incomes since the Revolution have considerably lessened. The whole city (Jerusalem) is

essentially a Jewish town. Banking, as well as trade and commerce, is monopolised by the Jews. The Government has found it necessary to organise a company of Jewish gendarmes. Hundreds of thousands of pounds are annually sent from Europe and America to enable colonists to build homes, hospitals, schools, and invalid homes. Over one hundred Jewish schools already exist in Jerusalem alone. Synagogues are rising up everywhere. The value of land has risen fourfold. The ignorant and poverty-stricken fellaheen (peasants) are being ousted from their homes and villages by the sharp European Jew settler, whose modern agricultural implements and methods have made the land produce harvests never before dreamt of by the natives. The Anglo-Palestine Company, a Zionist banking and commercial enterprise, is pushing the cause of Israel with splendid determination.

There are now over fifty agricultural colonies in the Holy Land, which is only slightly larger than Wales. Up to fifteen years ago this land was barren and desolate, mainly owing to the reign of the lazy

Turk, who hindered progress on all sides. The country was overrun by the Arabs, and everything that could be was taxed, even the trees being assessed at from sixpence to half-a-crown. Now we are beginning to see fulfilled before our very eyes that which was prophesied by Ezekiel, xxxvi. 34-36, "The desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities become fenced and inhabited I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it."

In the colony of Rishon-le-Zion alone, during the past few years some three million vine-slips have been planted, and over four hundred thousand fruit trees. Truly the desert is beginning to "blossom as the rose." Millions of vines, fig-trees, olive-trees, mulberry-trees, cotton-trees, and orange-trees, have been planted. The rainfall is said to be about double what it was twenty years ago. The average Palestinian rainfall is 662 mm.; whereas in Berlin it is 521 mm., and in London

589 mm. The language spoken in many of the colonies is the once dead language of Hebrew.

Zionist concerns comprise the Jewish Colonial Trust; Anglo-Palestine Company; Anglo-Levantine Banking Co.; The Jewish National Fund; an Afforestation Fund; Palestine Land Development Co.; Co-operative Settlement; Jewish National Museum; Workmen's Dwellings; Hygienic Institute; Agricultural Experiment Station; Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts; Gymnasiums; Jewish Technical Institute; National Library; Relief Fund for the Distressed Jews; Palestinian Industry Syndicate; Galilean Plantation Society; Palestine Real Estate Society; The Land Purchase Society; The Palestinian Planting Society.

Plans are now on foot for the establishment of a University in Jerusalem. The Zionist press comprises about one hundred papers in all parts of the world. An undertaking is on hand for supplying the whole of Palestine with electricity. Power is to be supplied by the Jordan, where the river falls nearly 700 feet between the

Waters of Merom and the Sea of Galilee. So much for the awakening and developments in Palestine within recent years.

The opening up of Egypt and the remarkable agricultural and commercial enterprises now progressing owing to the beneficent rule of our Government, and the opening up of the country by creating canals and barrages on the Nile, are so well known that it would be a waste of time to enumerate them.

The Nile and the Euphrates are by God's appointment the great rivers of the world. In the Old Testament days, the nations that held sway over these rivers were the greatest and most powerful in the world. "The LORD made a covenant with Abram" in Gen. xv. 18, saying "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt, unto the great river, the river Euphrates." Never in all their history have the Jews possessed this territory, except nominally in the days of Solomon. We can hardly look upon that temporary possession as the fulfilment of that promise and prophecy. Signs are not wanting of a fresh awakening and restoration to life

in this country which once was the centre of the world in the days of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylon Empire.

The Turkish Government has employed Sir William Willcocks to survey the land between the Tigris and Euphrates for the purpose of opening it up for agriculture and trade, and he has drawn up a scheme for restoring the ancient irrigation works and canals which were once the source of all the wealth and prosperity of the great world empires of Babylon, Assyria, and Nineveh. He suggests also that a railway should be built connecting the Mediterranean Sea with Baghdad, and that this line should go through Homs, north of Damascus to Hit, and on to Baghdad. This would open up a country at present marked "Syrian desert" on our maps, which far from being a desert, scientific agriculturists assert, could, with very little development, easily become one of the most fertile countries in the world.

To comprehend fully the far-reaching possibilities of this proposed scheme, it is necessary to have a knowledge of the

present railway systems and those proposed.

In Asia Minor there are Railway lines which connect with European Russia round the eastern extremity of the Caucasus Mountains, then lead to Tiflis and Batum, and have branches to Kars, near the Turkish frontier, and to Julfa on the Persian frontier. The German Baghdad railway is now piercing its way through the Taurus. Plans are drawn up for connecting the Egyptian railways with the Damascus to Mecca railway, and the Damascus railway with the German Baghdad railway, and the German Baghdad railway with the European railways. Consequently, in a few years the three great continents of Africa, Europe and Asia, will be united by rail.

Words fail to describe the importance of this development. Undoubtedly, the country or district where the junction is to be made will be one of the wealthiest and most important, politically, in the world. That country is within the Promised Land. Napoleon was an astute statesman, and it is said that he had plans

to rebuild Babylon, for he realised that the Power, which possessed control in that country, held the key to the world's riches and trade.

The past twenty years have seen marvellous developments in the near East, and there has been undoubtedly already a Partial restoration of Jews not only to their own land of Palestine, but also into the Promised Land.

2. A WHOLESALE RETURN PREDICTED.

In nearly all the passages of Scripture that deal with the Jews returning to their own land it is most instructive to note that the Gentile Powers are to help the Jews to go back and settle in their own country *e.g.*, Is. xiv. 1 2.—

“The Lord will have mercy on Jacob and will yet choose Israel and set them in their own land, and THE Peoples (*i.e.*, NATIONS) shall take them and bring them to their place.”

Is. xlix. 22.—

“Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles (Nations), and they shall bring thy sons.”

Is. lxvi. 20.—

“ They (Gentiles—Nations) shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all Nations to thy Holy Mountain, Jerusalem.”

It does seem as if we are on the very verge of the fulfilment of these prophecies.

Both Russia and Germany have promised to resuscitate the ancient Kingdom of Poland—which consists of Russia, Austria and German Poland. Now, in that area are more Jews than Poles. The large majority of whom are most abjectly poor, despised by all amongst whom they dwell.

The very first problem the new Kingdom of Poland will have to face will be the Jewish Problem.

Now, the Jews in the East of Europe are all ardent Zionists, and exceedingly keen on emigrating to Palestine. Is it not therefore probable, in the near future, that facilities may be given for the eight million unwanted Jews of Eastern Europe to settle down in the Promised Land. Such an exodus, naturally, would take both money and time. Given a stable government over Palestine and the Mesopotamia Valley, there would scarcely be any limit to

the marvellous developments that might come to pass in the next twenty-five years ; especially, if the combined nations unite together for the purpose of helping the Jews dwelling in their own countries to settle down and colonise these once barren wastes.

Undoubtedly, God is overruling this present awful War and preparing the way for the opening up of the old Bible Lands of Egypt, Assyria and Palestine.

" In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. . In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land : whom the LORD of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel Mine inheritance " (Isaiah xix.) 23-25.

What do all these developments portend ? The very near approach of " The Day of the LORD " which is to be ushered in by the appearing of our LORD and

Saviour Jesus Christ in the air for His Church.

“For the LORD Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD in the air: and so shall we ever be with the LORD” (Thess. iv. 15-16).

We are living in very ominous days, when our God is speaking as clearly and as emphatically as possible by these signs and preparations for His return, calling us to personal holiness of life and prayerful watchfulness.

“Of that day and hour knoweth no one not even the angels of heaven, but the Father only” (St. Matthew xxiv. 36). R.V.

“Watch therefore; for ye know not on what day your LORD cometh” (St. Matthew xxiv. 42). R.V.

CHAPTER II.

GREAT BRITAIN, THE JEW, AND PALESTINE.

AN EPOCH MAKING 'ANNOUNCE- MENT.

FOREIGN OFFICE,

November 2nd, 1917.

DEAR LORD ROTHSCHILD,—I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet :—

“ His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in

Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non Jewish communities in Palestine; or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours sincerely,

ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR.

This historic letter is assuredly one of the most memorable documents in the archives of Israel. By this declaration the latent nationhood of the race is formally recognised by the greatest Empire in the world as a political fact which should become part of the political constitution of mankind.

The declaration of His Majesty's Government as to the future of Palestine must have far-reaching and vital effects upon

the future of the Church of God, the Jews, and Judaism.

To the student of prophecy the announcement came with a thrill of excitement and joy, for the prophetic Scriptures look forward to the day when the Jews return to their land as the beginning of a series of events that are destined to establish God's Kingdom here upon earth.

It must be remembered that the Jew is God's chosen race. Twice over it is said of them, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos iii. 2). "The God of Israel," "The God of Jacob" are among the titles which the Lord rejoices to use of Himself.

God has covenanted with this race that a day will come when they shall be "all righteous" (Is. lx. 21), and that they shall be "named the priests of the Lord: and men shall call you the ministers of our God" (Is. lxi. 6).

All these prophetic promises are to be fulfilled after they have been restored to their land and after they have acknowledged the Lord Jesus to be their Messiah and King.

Consequently, ever since 1897, when the Jews met together at Basle for their first Zionist Congress, the Bible student realised that the day could not be far distant when somehow or other facilities would be given to the Jew to get back to his land. It is true twenty years ago the educated Jewry, as well as the majority of Christians, thought the Zionist programme to be Utopian and absurd—a movement before its time. They were sure that the Turk would never allow the Jews to settle down in Palestine.

Twenty years, however, have brought many and startling changes. But none more soul-stirring and thrilling than this proclamation to restore the Jews to Palestine. For some 2,000 years now there has been no manifest Theophany. Since the days of the Ascension and Pentecost there has been no special manifestation of God to man. If we read Scripture aright, this restoration of the Jews to Palestine is going to hasten that day foretold in both the Old and New Testaments, when the Lord Jesus will manifest Himself again to the sons of men.

The Jews and the land of Palestine are like charts to the mariner. As we study the prophecies concerning "the people" and "the land," we hold the key to the mysteries of God's plans and purposes for the world. God is not a God of chaos. This world-war has not been allowed by God except for some wise purpose. He certainly is not the author of it. The days of the domination of sin and wickedness are coming to a climax. It is always darkest before dawn. Prophecy distinctly predicts that when certain things happen to the Jews and to their promised land, then the Messiah will manifest Himself to them.

In Isaiah xi. 11 and 12 the prophet declared that, "It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the *second time* to recover the remnant of His people. . . . And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Revised Version).

Ezekiel xxxvii. also depicts the restora-

tion of the people to the land ; but the significant thing that we need specially to call attention to is the phrase " In that day," which is common to all the prophecies that speak of the restoration of the land to the people and the people to the land.

" *In that day.*" To what day do these prophetic Scriptures refer ? Both Jewish and Christian interpreters of these prophecies are united on this point, and they all assert that it refers to the Messianic day. The devout Jew is looking for the coming of a reigning Messiah ; in the same way the Christian is looking for the Second Advent of Christ. We must remember that the word " Christ " means " Messiah." We are, therefore, to expect in the very near future, shortly after the restoration of the Jews to Palestine, that God in some remarkable way is going to overrule events to hasten forward that prophetic day when " the kingdoms of the earth shall become the Kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ."

But, let it be remembered, that day cannot come until Zechariah xii. 10 is

literally fulfilled, when "they shall look unto Me, whom they have pierced," and in Zechariah xiv. 4, "In that day His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives," and in verse 9, "The Lord shall be King over all the earth."

In our Advent season, we read day by day, according to the plan laid down by our Church, passages of Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments which deal with the Second Advent of Christ and the restoration of the Jews to Palestine and the coming of God's Kingdom here on earth.

Is Christ coming soon? We are living in extraordinarily critical days, and those of us who have studied this question very closely cannot but feel that the day described by St. Paul in 1 Thessalonians iv. 16 cannot be far off when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever

be with the Lord " (Revised Version).

May God prepare us, one and all, for that solemn day, for the angelic message of Acts i. 11 will be literally fulfilled, " This Jesus which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come *in like manner* as ye beheld Him going into heaven " (Revised Version).

CHAPTER III.

RUSSIA AFTER THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS TO PALESTINE.

A WARNING.

There are two remarkable chapters in Ezekiel which demand most careful thought and study in the light of the restoration of the Jews to Palestine and the Promised Land.

The Jews imagine that all their difficulties will be solved if only they can be restored to their own land and live according to their national ideals. They little realise restoration means judgment preparatory to the coming of their Messiah.

The sufferings the Jews have gone through during the past nineteen centuries are to come to a climax immediately after their settlement in Palestine. It seems as if Russia and Powers allied with her are

destined to become the instrument in God's Hand for administering this judgment.
GOD'S INDICTMENT AGAINST THE CHURCH.

In Ezekiel xxxiv the prophet describes the children of Israel to be like a flock of sheep scattered all over the world, hated and despised of all nations. The shepherds, possibly referring to the church of Christendom, to whose care they have been committed, being false to their charge and more concerned about feeding themselves and looking after their own interests than those of the sheep over whom they have been charged by God to tend and protect.

Such is the brutal callousness of these false shepherds that God says that He Himself will become the Shepherd of Israel, who will gather them "out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

"I will bring them out of all peoples (nations). . . . I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel."

Evidently, therefore, this prophecy concerns the condition of affairs under which Israel exists before the coming of their Messiah, the Shepherd of Israel, and

exactly tallies with their present woe-begone state all the world over.

RESTORATION OF THE LAND PREDICTED.

In Ezekiel xxxvi. we have foreshadowed the restoration of the land in preparation for the coming of the people.

“And, thou, son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel.”

“But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to My people Israel; for *they are at hand to come.*”

“Ye shall be tilled and sown.”

“The land that was desolate shall be tilled.”

“And they shall say, this land that was desolate is become like the Garden of Eden.”

This war has been preparing the way for the fulfilment of these prophecies by turning the Turk bag and baggage out of the Promised Land and taking from it the heavy yoke of Gentile dominion.

RESTORATION OF THE PEOPLE PREDICTED.

In Ezekiel xxxvii. we have foreshadowed the restoration of the whole house of Israel united and enjoying the possession

of their own God given land.

“ Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O My people, and I will bring you into the land of Israel.”

“ Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land : and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel.”

A CONFEDERACY AGAINST THE PEOPLE
AND THE LAND.

In Ezekiel xxxviii. we seem to be quite in another atmosphere to that of the preceding chapter. Just as Pharaoh of old, after letting the people go, hardened his heart and endeavoured to enslave them again ; so, in the near future, after the people have been restored to the land and the land to the people, the Pharaoh of to-day—viz., the Prince of Rosh, Meshéah and Tubal being allied with Persia, and two African nations of Cush and Put, “ Gomer, and all his hordes : the house of Togarmah

in the uttermost parts of the north and all his hordes: even many peoples (nations) with thee." All of whom are united for one purpose to advance against Palestine.

PURPOSE OF THE CONFEDERACY.

God through the mouth of His prophet Ezekiel warns Israel: "In the LATTER YEARS thou shalt come into the land that is brought back (restored R.V. margin) from the sword, that is gathered out of many peoples (Gentile nations) and they shall dwell securely. ALL of them."

It appears, therefore, that Israel will return and imagine all is safe and expect no harm from anyone.

Evidently, at the conclusion of this present war, the Jews will be given facilities to develop their own country along the plans now formulated by the Zionist and nationalist societies.

Suddenly just when everything appears to be working splendidly and the people are developing the land, it is predicted that these combined nations from the North and North-East will sweep down: "Shalt come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land,

thou and all they hordes, and many peoples (nations) with thee. It shall come to pass in that day, that THINGS shall come into thy mind, and thou shalt devise an evil device : And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages ; I will go to them that are at quiet, that dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates. To take the spoil and to take the prey : to turn thine hand against the waste places that are NOW inhabited, and against *the people that are gathered out of the nations*, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in THE MIDDLE OF THE EARTH."

The Promised Land is just in the middle of the old world, the Eastern Hemisphere. WHAT NATIONS ARE REFERRED TO HERE ?

Gog, of the land of Magog, the Prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, is generally thought to be the Emperor, King, or President of the Russian Empire, who is to be allied with Persia and some African nations, with Gomer and all his hordes, and Togarmah and all his hordes, many nations with them."

Is it possible that here is foreshadowed a future entente comprising of Russia, Germany, the remnant of the Turks and Persia?

The Revd. C. H. Titterton, B.D., in his helpful book on "Armageddon" (Thynne 1/6 net) says ;—

GOMER—the name of the son of Japheth (Gen. x. 3), mentioned in Ezek. xxxviii. 6 along with Togarmah "of the *north quarters*," assisting Gog. Thought to belong to the region of the Caspian and Euxine. Later Cappadocia, called in Armenian "Gamir." Held to be the Cimmerians, whose home was north of the Euxine, from which they were expelled by the Scythians.

In Lange's Commentary on Gen. x. 3 we get the following remarks on Gomer :—

"*Gomer*.—G, M, R : These radical letters are found extensively combined in the history and geography of Europe ; as though some early roving people had left the mark of their name from the Pontus, on Black Sea, to Ireland : G, M, R ; K, M, R ; KyMMeRii (Cymmerians) by metathesis, K, M, R, CRiMez, G, R, M, GeRMani, CyMRi, Cymri, Cimbri, Cumbri,

Cumberland, Humberland, Northumberland, Cambria, etc. They may not all be etymologically connected, but there is every probability that they were left by the same old people, ever driven on westward by successive waves of migration."

TOGARMAH.—Mentioned in Gen. x. 3 as the son of Gomer, the son of Japheth. Also mention of him is found in 1 Chron. i. 6; Ezek. xxvii. 14 and xxxviii. 6, which last reads: "Gomer and all his bands (wings or forces); the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands; and many people (peoples) with thee."

Togarmah is held to refer to North Armenia, though generally used by Jewish writers of the Turks. Armenians are still said to be called "the house of Torgom." Some see Togarmah in "Turk" and "Tartar." Togarmah is combined with Gog in the last war of Armageddon.

One cannot be dogmatic in throwing out this suggestion. Is it not likely that the forthcoming peace that must soon be declared will be most unsatisfactory to Russia, Germany and Turkey, especially

with regard to the ' near Eastern question ?

These powers, therefore after, some respite will unite to set things right from their point of view.

WHAT PART IS GREAT BRITAIN LIKELY TO TAKE ?

It does not appear that another war is likely to immediately arise, only there is a protest from " Sheba, Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof."

Now it is interesting to notice in Is. lx. 9, that " the ships of Tarshish " are to be used for the restoration of the people to the land.

Do these not refer to the navies and ships of the Western Powers ? Great Britain being one of those Powers.

NEMESIS.

" In that day—thou shalt come from thy place out of the uttermost parts of the north, thou and many peoples (nations) with thee—a mighty army—it shall come to pass IN THE LATTER DAYS, that I will bring thee against My Land, that the nations may know Me when I shall be

sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes."

"It shall come to pass in that day, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, that MY fury shall come up into MY nostrils. Surely in that day there shall be a great fury shaking in the land of Israel—and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at MY Presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down—and I will call for a sword against him—every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood: and I will rain upon him and upon his hordes, and upon many peoples (nations) that are with him, an overflowing shower, a great hailstones, fire and brimstone. And I will magnify Myself, and sanctify Myself, and I will make Myself known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lórd."

FINAL JUDGMENT.

Ezekiel xxxix. continues in most lurid and vivid language the story of Judgment.

"And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land."

“Thus saith the Lord God—speak unto the birds of every sort, and to every beast of the field—assemble yourselves, and come. Gather yourselves on every side to My sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you,” etc.

“And I will set *My Glory* among the nations, and all nations shall see My judgment that I have executed, and My hand that I have laid upon them.”

“So the House of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God, *from that day forward.*”

FINAL GLORY.

“Thus saith the Lord God: “Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel (hitherto the nations had given the land to the Jew and the Jews had returned through their own efforts. Now God gives the land to the people and the people to the land)—when they shall dwell securely in their land, and NONE shall *make them afraid*—neither will I hide My face any more from them; for I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.”

IV.

THE RESTORATION.

THE season of Advent is a time of hope, a time when those who love their Saviour have their thoughts directed to the blessed hope of His return ; a time when we think of the future more than of the past ; of promises still unfulfilled, more than of those already realised. I need not say that the one great central object of all our hopes is the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ; but there are other promises so intimately connected with it, that it is almost impossible to consider it alone.

One of these is the return of the Jews. Our blessed Lord, as the Son of David, is the King of the Jews ; so that their restoration is inseparable from the manifestation of His kingdom. David could not have been king of Israel if Israel

had been scattered through the wide, wide world ; and I see not, for my own part, how the Son of David is to reign on the throne of David if Israel be not gathered. Thus the return of Israel is intimately connected in the word of prophecy with the restoration of Jerusalem ; as, for example, in Ps. cii. 16, ' When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in his glory.'

I think, therefore, that it may encourage our hope of the Advent if we study the prophetic word with reference to the Jews. There are two ways in which we might do this. We might either collect texts and arguments from various parts of Scripture, or take one passage and consider it as a consecutive prophecy. I believe the latter to be the more profitable mode, and therefore I propose to ask your especial attention to the thirty-sixth and the three following chapters of Ezekiel. They will be found to throw great light on four subjects : **THE RESTORATION, THE CONVERSION, THE REUNION OF ISRAEL, AND THE ATTACK THAT WILL BE MADE FROM THE NORTH ON RESTORED JERUSALEM.** May the

God of all grace bless our study, and prepare us with loving hearts to welcome the appearing of our Lord !

In the thirty-sixth chapter there are two addresses, one to the land, and one to the people. That to the land commences in ver. 1, that to the people, ver. 22. So the 9th verse is spoken 'to the mountains, the hills, the rivers, and the valleys.' It is to them that God says, 'I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown.' But the 24th verse is addressed to the people. It is to them that He says, 'I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.'

Let us consider the two addresses.

I. TO THE LAND.

We must not be surprised at its being thus addressed, for we are told that it is 'a land which the Lord careth for.' No wonder then that He thinks for its welfare. But what does He say of it ?

(1.) He predicts its present condition. According to ver. 4, the hills are turned into desolate wastes, and the cities are forsaken. You could not have a more accu-

rate description of the country at the present time. The land once flowing with milk and honey is become a desolation. The terraced slopes once covered with the vine and the olive are now barren and rocky wastes. The hill-tops on which the cities of Israel used to be built are now crowned with ruins, and the greater part of the country wears the aspect of lifeless desolation. And why is it? The prophecy gives the reason. It ascribes it all to the power of some oppressive conqueror treading it under foot. So, in ver. 2, we read, 'The enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession.'

And who is that enemy? Who is that conqueror? There can be only one answer to the question. It is the Turk. It was Rome, but it is now Turkey. It was Rome that beat it down originally; but it is Turkey that is treading it down now. It is Turkey that says this day, 'The ancient high places are ours in possession.' It is Turkey that by its dreadful misgovernment has destroyed all confidence, and by its plunder and rapine pre

vented the possibility of prosperity. The slopes of Lebanon have witnessed the same awful scenes as the plains of Bulgaria, and the whole of that fair land of Israel is blighted and withered by the deadly blast of Turkish oppression.

But it will not be so always. Turkish dominion is not to be for ever. The Euphrates is drying up. The Ottoman power is doomed by God. According to ver. 7, those heathen 'shall bear their shame;' and the promise now given to the mountains is, ver. 10, 'I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded.'

The time is coming, therefore, when the land shall be once more a land flowing with milk and honey, when the grapes of Eshcol shall once more be gathered from its terraces, when its cities shall be rebuilt, and once more filled by a prosperous and teeming population, when the very hills themselves shall give their echo to the words of the prophet, 'Break forth into singing, ye mountains, and every tree therein; for the

Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.'

And why will this be done? Why is the Turk to lose the possession of those ancient high places? Why are those barren hills once more to become fruitful? The 9th verse answers the question: 'For behold I *am* for you, and I *will* turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown.' Observe the distinction between the '*am*' and the '*will*.' 'I *am* for you now,' he says, *i.e.*, even in the days of your desolation, even while the Turk is oppressing you. So God may be most truly for us even when we see no sign of His power; for us in the faithfulness of His covenant love, even though we see no outward sign of His presence. But He does not stop there, for He adds, 'I *will* turn unto you.' And as soon as the set time is come you shall see such a manifestation of power and grace that 'you shall know that I am the Lord.'

Let those who are in trouble of any kind learn from these words one great practical lesson, viz., this—He may be for you before the time comes when He will turn unto

you ; so that you may trust His love when you cannot see His hand.

‘ Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for His grace ;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.’

And we may apply the same to the present position of the whole Church of Christ. In one sense He has not yet turned unto us, for He is not yet come in His glory, and is still out of sight in heaven ; but He is for us now ; every day and every hour ; in cloud as well as in sunshine. So even when waiting we may say boldly, as St. Paul did, ‘ If God be for us, who can be against us ? ’

But to recall our thoughts to Palestine. The words teach us clearly that God is for the land now, even while the Turk holds the ancient high places in possession, and that in His own time He will turn unto it, so that it shall be once more tilled and sown.

By whom, then, shall this be done ?
By whose diligence shall the hills and valleys be brought back into fertility ?
By the Turks ? by the Bedouin Arabs ?

or by the scanty and lifeless population now residing in the ancient homes of Israel ?

The chapter answers the question and shows that it will be BY ISRAEL HIMSELF, for in ver. 8 we read, 'But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel.' The land will be restored to the people, and the people to the land.

II. TO THE PEOPLE.

We turn then to the address to the people, and there are three great lessons that we may learn respecting them.

(1.) **They are ready.** The expression in ver. 8 deserves our close attention : 'They are at hand to come.' They are all in God's hand and ready. He has preserved them as a separate people for the last 1900 years. They have been dispersed over the whole world, but kept distinct and separate. They have not been fused with the nations amongst whom they have been dwelling. They have lived amongst us, but have never lost their nationality. There has been the accurate fulfilment of Balaam's

prophecy, 'The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.'

Some people have lately entertained the idea that we English are the lost tribes of Israel. But that prophecy by Balaam is decisive against any such opinion. We do not dwell alone; we are reckoned among the nations; and there is no people in the world in whom there is a greater fusion of races than there is amongst ourselves.

But as for Israel, they are at hand, because they are preserved as a distinct people waiting for the summons of God. I do not mean that all the Jews would care to return. I believe that many are far too well satisfied with their wealth amongst us Gentiles to feel any desire for the Holy Land. But there cannot be a doubt that, let the great Euphratean flood recede so far as to leave Palestine dry, and let the jubilee trumpet be sounded from God, and there are thousands and tens of thousands of the ancient seed of Abraham, preserved by God's providence, and prepared by God's Spirit, to arise as a recov-

ered nation, and take possession of the land given to their fathers.

(2.) **They are scattered.**—When we say they are at hand we must not suppose that they are collected as it were at the door ; for according to this and countless other prophecies, they are scattered amongst the nations. In ver. 19 He says, ‘ I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries.’ I need not stop to point out the remarkable fulfilment of this prophecy. It is a notorious fact that the Jews as a separate people are scattered everywhere. But I want you to observe carefully the illustrations given of their present position. There are two figures by which it is illustrated, two figures which remind us of the words at the end of the parable of the Prodigal Son, ‘ This my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost and is found,’ for the one represents them as lost, and the other as dead.

In chap. xxxiv. 16, they are described as lost, for the Lord God says, ‘ I will seek that which was lost.’ And in ver. 12, He describes the scattering of the flock in the cloudy and dark day, and represents Him-

self as the faithful shepherd, seeking them out, and once more collecting them under His care within the fold.

In chap. xxxvii. He describes them as dead. They are there represented by dry bones lying scattered in the valley of vision, very many and very dry, in a condition so hopeless that we might well say, 'Can these dry bones live?' Thus Israel itself is represented as saying, 'Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.' So, when they are brought bone to bone, and when the skin and the flesh cover them, it will be an illustration of the promise, ver. 12, 'O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.'

It is well to look at these descriptions when we are told that we English are the lost tribes; for if we are, we must remember that we are Israel lost and dead, not Israel enjoying the prosperity that is to follow restoration. Our present condition is represented in prophecy by the bones lying scattered in the valley of vision, very many and very dry; and our present cry

must be, 'Our bones are dried, our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts.' It is manifestly wrong to take the predictions of restored prosperity and apply them to this present period, which is one of dispersion and hopelessness. Those who believe they are the seed of Ephraim must therefore believe they are like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision.

But it is still more important as a confirmation of our hope; for some people speak of the restoration of Israel as utterly improbable, if not impossible. But you will observe that God Himself describes them as being reduced to such a condition that they say, 'Our hope is lost.' But though they may have given up their hope, God has not given up His faithfulness; but His loving eye is over them still; and when the time comes they will be restored with such a conspicuous display of His power that even the heathen looking on shall know that He is the Lord.

(3.) **They will be gathered.**—In chap. xxxiv. 16, He speaks in almost exactly the same words as our blessed Saviour,

and says, 'I will seek that which is lost.' But He will not only seek but find, for, chap: xxxvi. 24, He says, 'I will take you from among the heathen (*i.e.* Nations), and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into you own land.' So there is the seeking, the finding, the taking into His own hand, the gathering, and the continued mercy bearing them home. He will find them when lost in their graves, and will never either leave or forsake them till by His own loving care He has brought them safe to the land which He gave to their fathers.

So much for this remarkable prophecy, —a prophecy which appears not unlikely before long to be fulfilled, for the decay*

*In the present fearful war it is interesting to note how increasingly is the sure word of prophecy being fulfilled in the decay and downfall of the Turkish Empire. In spite of all the efforts of diplomacy on the part of England and France to induce Turkey to stand aside in this gigantic conflict she decided to throw in her lot with Germany, and is now but a puppet in the hands of her ally. The immediate result has been that Turkey has lost all suzerainty over Egypt. Her authority in Arabia has gone. Her rule in Mesopotamia and the Holy Land is gradually vanishing

of Turkey cannot stop where it is ; and if the great Euphratean flood continues to dry up as it has been doing lately, there seems no reason why the oppressed nations of Asia should not be set free as well as those of Europe, and so the mountains of Palestine once more become the home of Israel.

But I cannot leave the subject there, for the promise here given to Israel presents to us such a wonderful illustration of the present work of our blessed Lord and Saviour in the recovery of souls that it would be a sin not to point it out. Surely He must have had it in His mind, when He gave the parable of the lost sheep, and taught that He came to seek and to save the lost.

Picture to yourselves a poor outcast Jew, trodden down by the oppressor of his people, without hope, lost, and as good as dead ; and think of that man by the good hand of God sought, found, delivered, and restored ; and there you have the picture of what God is doing daily.

There are thousands of persons

whose souls are in the condition of that outcast Jew. They are far away from God, and through sin are banished from His presence. They are just like the Jew as described in this prophecy, outcast, lost, and dead. They have become in many cases so deeply discouraged that they are ready to say, 'Our hope is lost.' They believe there is hope for others, but they cannot see it for themselves. Their hearts are so dead that they cannot believe it possible they shall ever live before God. Now if there be such amongst the readers of this little book I would entreat them to look at the love, the faithfulness, the grace, the mercy with which God promises to seek out the Jew and save him, and I would beg them to consider whether the same grace and mercy may not be shown to themselves.

You have seen the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in coming down from heaven to take your nature, and pay your ransom. You know how He sought out sinners when He was on earth, and may we not trust Him now to seek out you by His Spirit, and save you by His grace ?

You say you are lost. So is the Jew, but God will gather him in, and save him ; and will not the same Lord Jesus do the same for you ?

You say you are dead, and cannot rise ; but we know from the prophecy that the dry bones can live, so why should not you ?

You say that you are such a sinner that you cannot bear to think of the past ; but they, when God calls them, will loathe themselves in their own sight, for all their iniquities ; and yet they will be gathered in by His grace. So now, though you loathe yourself in your own eyes, why should you not trust Him to have mercy on you, to apply to you the cleansing blood, to take hold on you, to gather you into His own fold, and to bring you through Christ Jesus so near to Himself that you may be able to rest in His love, and rejoice in the glories of His kingdom ?

The promises to the Jew are therefore sermons for the Gentile. When we read respecting Israel that a gracious God will seek those that are lost, and gather in those

that are dead ; we may accept with profound thanksgiving the blessed assurance that though lost, and though dead, the unworthy sinner through the great grace which is in Christ Jesus may be sought out even now, and eternally saved in Christ Jesus His Lord.

V.

THE CONVERSION.

I EXAMINED in the previous lecture the prophecy contained in these chapters of Ezekiel respecting the restoration of Israel. We were taught in that prophecy that God has mercy in store both for the land and for the people ; that as for the mountains and valleys of Israel, He is now for them, and will one day turn to them ; and that as for the people, as He has scattered so will He gather them, will take them from among the heathen, will collect them from all countries, and will bring them into their own land. But nothing was said about their conversion. The restoration was the only subject. But restoration would be a poor gift without conversion, and it would be a very poor blessing to Israel if they were restored to their home, but not brought back to God. You may have a beautiful home, but if you are an unconverted man you are an outcast from God ; and so Israel might be restored to the land, and the land to Israel, but yet if there

were no conversion of heart there could be no real happiness in a Father's love.

Let us consider, then, the conversion of Israel, and examine from this great prophecy four subjects,—the time of it, the character, the power by which it will be effected, and the means employed. And let us remember while we study that the prophecies to the Jews are full of instruction for us Gentiles, so that from the great change which is about to take place in them we may learn the nature of that most blessed change which is taking place now in all those who are truly brought to God.

I. The Time.

The great question with reference to the time is, whether the conversion of Israel will take place before the restoration or after it. Whether the Jews will be converted before they are restored, or restored before they are converted. The subject is one of immense importance. for if the conversion is to take place first, the restoration is thrown back to an almost infinite distance. But in the study of it we must bear clearly in mind the marked distinction between the conversion of the

elect remnant and the national conversion of the great people. The remnant according to the election of grace are being gathered in now. Week after week souls are being brought out of the nation unto God.

But the nation as a nation is still in unbelief; and the nation as a nation still rejects Christ: but the nation as a nation is to become a believing people unto God, a great army for the Lord of hosts. Now when will this great change take place? In their dispersion, or in their own land? Before their restoration, or after it? On this point the prophecy seems quite decisive. In the vision of the dry bones you will remember that there are two successive steps in the recovery. First, bone comes to bone and the skin and the flesh cover them. In that first act there was a complete restoration of form; but according to ver. 8 of this chapter xxxvii., 'there was no breath in them.' There was the representation of the form of the nation without the life, or, in other words, restoration without conversion; but after that, ver. 10, 'The

breath came into them, and they lived and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.' There was life then as well as form, conversion as well as restoration, and the result was that they became a vast army for God. That this is the true explanation of the vision is perfectly clear from ver. 13, 'Ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves.' They will not know Him therefore until after they are brought up out of their graves.

You see exactly the same in the direct prophecy of the thirty-sixth chapter. If you read verses 24, 25, 26 together, and observe the word *then* which connects them, the question is settled. 'I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. *Then* will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh,

and I will give you an heart of flesh.'

Nothing can be clearer than the order of events in that passage. They will be taken, gathered, brought into their own land, and *then* converted by His grace. And mark the importance of this conclusion. It teaches us that we are not to wait for a long, tedious, and toilsome process of gradual conversion before we look out for the restoration, but that the restoration may take place at any time. The people are at hand, and the world seems ripe for their return. Let the wasting power go on a little longer in the Turkish Empire; let the Euphratean overflow dry up a little further; let the Great Powers apply to Turkey in Asia the same kind of pressure which they are applying to Turkey in Europe; and when we have secured autonomy in Bulgaria,* we may

*A few months after these words were written the revolt of Bulgaria took place, followed by fearful Turkish atrocities, which, at the instance of Mr. W. E. Gladstone, stirred England to almost demand there and then the removal of the Turk, "bag and baggage," from Europe. By the beginning of 1878, at the close of the war which ensued, Turkey was practically at the feet of Russia, and but for the intervention of England and the Treaty of Berlin, the northern power would have taken Constantinople.

By the Treaty of San Stefano Turkey was compelled to recognise to a more or less extent the independence

next hear of autonomy in Palestine, and when that is once granted the way will be made plain for the kings of the East to come over and take possession.

II. The character of the conversion.

But now let us turn to the character or details of this conversion; and in so doing we shall see how the same Gospel applies to all classes, and is exactly the same both for Jew and Gentile; for the future, past, and present. You have in this prophecy an exact description of the blessed and sacred work, which I trust is now going on in the Gentile Church. If you study it you will see there are four points described in succession—pardon, change of heart, obedience, and fellowship with God.

(1.) There is PARDON. This is described in the prophecy by the sprinkling of water,

of Bulgaria, Rumania, Servia and Montenegro, and to allow Austria to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Bulgarians became an independent kingdom in 1908. In 1881 Turkey, under compulsion, ceded Thessaly and part of Epirus to Greece. In 1912, after her war with Italy, she lost Tripoli, so that her rule in Africa has now ceased to exist.

In the war of 1912-13 the four Balkan States and Greece, after a short but sanguinary war, it seemed as if Turkish rule in Europe was to be no more; but a sudden outburst of vigour on her part gained her the possession of Adrianople and the strip of European territory still precariously held by her.

In 1916 Turkey lost Egypt, and in December, 1917, Jerusalem and Southern Palestine

‘I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.’ You observe it does not say, ‘I will immerse you,’ but ‘I will sprinkle you.’ It is well that those whose minds are disturbed about such trifles as immersing and sprinkling should observe this. It seems very natural that the sprinkling of the precious blood of Christ should be represented by the sprinkling of water, but no one insists upon it. According to the Church of England, a person may be either immersed or sprinkled in baptism. What we do insist upon is that it is a matter of no importance whatever—that the one is exactly as good as the other, and that God’s blessing on His own sacrament does not depend on a minute point of trifling ritualism. Depend upon it, if you are brought in living faith to the cross of Christ for the pardon of your sins, it will not matter one atom whether you have been immersed or sprinkled in your baptism. It is the washing itself that is the matter of real importance, that washing described by St. Paul (1 Cor. vi. 11) : ‘And such were some of you : but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified

in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God ' ; or by St. John (Rev. i. 5) : ' Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood ; ' or by the angel (Rev. vii. 14) : ' These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' Where there is this washing there is conversion, and this is the washing predicted of the Jew, and bestowed now in boundless grace and mercy in our own times, our own homes, our own country, and our own Church, on every individual that is brought to Christ for the pardon of his sin.

(2.) There will be a **CHANGE OF HEART** (ver. 26) : ' A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.' The forgiveness of God is always accompanied by His transforming power, and the forgiven man is always changed, so that where there is no change of heart there can be no assurance of the forgiveness of sin. Now we all know the

power of the stony heart—the heart that is always cold and never feels ; the heart on which you can make no impression ; the heart that is hardened against the truth....

I fear there are many such stony hearts amongst English Christians. We need not go to Israel to find them, for there are far too many close at our own doors. But God is continually changing them, and I trust I am speaking to many this day out of whom He has already taken the stony heart, and to whom He has given the heart of flesh. If so, they can understand the nature of the change here promised to Israel. The time will come when opposition will give way to submission, prejudice to faith, hatred to love, blindness to sight, and hard-hearted rejection to a loving, thankful reception of Jesus the Christ.

(3.) There will be OBEDIENCE (ver. 27) : ‘ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And this obedience will not be the obedience of fear, or of compulsion, but the

willing obedience of persons led by the Spirit. It will be prompted by the Spirit in the heart, and not forced on unwilling slaves. When God changes the heart, we can say, 'Oh, how I love Thy law.' His mind becomes our mind, His will our will, and His holiness the desire of our heart. And as this follows now when a soul is really brought to the Lord Jesus, so will it be with Israel when God sprinkles them with the precious blood, and bestows upon them the heart of flesh. The Spirit within them 'will cause them to walk in His ways,' and they will not be forced to obey a law they do not love, for they will love that which God commands.

(4.) There will be A BLESSED REUNION with God Himself (ver. 28): 'Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.' This is exactly the promise of the new covenant (Jer. xxxi. 33), and many know well the unspeakable blessedness of it in their daily life. They know what it is to live as His people, and to trust Him as their God. As His people in Christ Jesus, we are saved by Him; as His people we are

called to live to Him ; and as our God. He saves, He guides, He provides, He preserves, and bestows upon us the sacred privilege of abiding fellowship, and intimate communion with Himself. So will it be with Israel, when every barrier is broken down on both sides, and they are brought back, as a nation, to be a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people unto God.

III. The power of the conversion.

Now if we look at the present condition of the Jewish people, we see in them very little hope of such a change, and it is well for us to consider by what power it will be accomplished. One thing is perfectly plain, adversity without Christ has no power to produce it. Trouble cannot change a heart. For eighteen hundred years they have groaned under a heavier national affliction than any nation in the world, but their heart has not been changed by their troubles. You may crush a block of granite, but that will not change its nature.

Our missions do not seem likely to effect it. God has greatly blessed those

missions in gathering out an elect remnant; but unless we advance infinitely quicker than at the present rate, we are a long, long way off the conversion of the nation.

Prosperity will not effect it. As I have already shown, this prophecy describes them as restored, and re-formed, but yet without life; for prosperity does not change the heart any more than trouble. Did you ever know a man converted by his wealth? or brought to God by the luxuries of his beautiful home? So the Jew will not be converted even by the mercies shown to them in their restoration.

How then will the mighty change be brought about, and by what power? The prophecy answers the question, and shows that the power will be exactly the same as that by which God effects the same change in our own hearts, and our own day—the power of the Holy Ghost. In the vision of dry bones when the prophet prophesied to the bones he produced form without life; but when he wanted life he prophesied to the wind, or to the Spirit, and the Spirit entered the reconstructed

bodies, and they lived. So in this passage you see the same thing predicted in ver. 27, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.'

And the power is yet more clearly exhibited in the corresponding prophecy in Zechariah. There we find an account of Judea peopled by restored Judah, of Jerusalem rebuilt, and of God declaring of the governors of Judah (chap. xii. 5) that they shall say in their hearts, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God.' But there is no change of heart, nor any reception of the Lord Jesus Christ, in consequence of the restoration, until at length God's promise, ver. 10, is fulfilled, 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.' Then they will look to the

Lord Jesus ; then their heart will be broken under the sense of sin ; then they will wash in the fountain open for sin and for uncleanness ; then all past sin will be blotted out for ever ; and then, being reconciled, they will be brought into the full enjoyment of fellowship with God.

May we not learn the lesson that when we want to see a change of heart either in ourselves or others, we must not rely on a change of circumstances to produce it ? We must not suppose that altered circumstances will produce an altered nature. If the stony heart is taken away and the heart of flesh given, it must be done by no less a power than that of God the Holy Ghost Himself. When all other powers fail, He can melt the granite rock, and instead of the hard, stubborn, unfeeling resistance of the opponent of God's salvation, He can call forth the loving, gentle, childlike submission of the humble, happy, confiding believer in His name.

IV. The means.

The converting power then is very clearly the Holy Spirit poured forth on the

people, just as it was on the day of Pentecost. But we have still to consider the means which the Holy Spirit will employ, or, in other words, what mental process will He employ in softening the heart and producing the change? I do not mean, what influence will He bring to bear from without, but what will He do within? For the answer to this question we must turn once more to Zechariah, and there we shall see, that He makes use of two things : two things which some people regard as utterly powerless, but which God will one day bless to the conversion of the Jewish nation, and which in our day He is now blessing to the conversion of thousands and tens of thousands of living souls. These two things are a prayer and a look.

A prayer, for He is the Spirit of grace and supplication, so that the first acting of the Holy Ghost on the mind of the unconverted Jew will be to prompt him to pray. The poor man will not be required to wait till he has the assurance of his acceptance, and then begin to pray. But prayer will be the first symptom of any softening of his heart, and supplication the

first evidence of the presence and power of the Holy Ghost drawing him to God.

A look. I am inclined to believe that the look here described is the sight of the Saviour once pierced but now glorified, when He shall appear for the final deliverance of Jerusalem ; and that the marvellous display of grace and power in that deliverance will fill the Jewish people with the most profound grief for their awful sin in having pierced Him on Calvary. But whether it be so or not, we may learn the power of a look.

What can be more insignificant than a look ? It does not take an instant, and may be seen by no one. But a look may be an act of adultery ; a look may be the act of faith ; and a look may soften a hard heart to the salvation of the soul. But that look to be effectual must be fixed on the crucified One, on the pierced Saviour, on the Son of God bearing our sins. See the predicted effect of such a look, Zech. xii. 10 ; where you read, ‘ They shall look upon me whom they have pierced,’ and you learn that that look alone will produce what nineteen centuries of trouble

have failed in producing, viz., a broken and a contrite heart. 'They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.'

And now remember, brethren, that what is true of the Jew is true also of the Gentile, so that if any of you are here this day deploring a cold, dead, stony heart of unbelief, you must remember that you cannot force that stone into softness, warmth, or life, but you may look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and pray; and that while you are doing so, God the Holy Ghost can take away the heart of stone, and give the heart of flesh. He can bring you to the fountain open for sin and for uncleanness. He can sprinkle you with the most precious blood of Christ, and wash you that you may be clean; so that your part is at once, without waiting for any evidence of your acceptance, to look to the pierced One just as you are; and, pleading His precious blood, to begin, before you are saved, to pray that you may be saved, that so praying, and

so looking, you may experience the blessings about to be bestowed on the Jews.

‘I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.’ ‘I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.’ ‘Ye shall be My people, and I will be your God.’

VI.

REUNION.

THERE are few things more beautiful than union, and few more painful than division. 'Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.' And how painful, how sad, how bitter a thing it is when brethren are divided, and there is any disunion amongst those who ought to be one. The divisions in the Church of Christ do more harm, and hinder more souls, than all the opposition of an unbelieving world.

I purpose to speak in this lecture of the repair of one of the most fatal breaches that ever arose amongst God's chosen people, a breach amongst brethren, brethren who had once lived and acted together in the spirit of a common patriotism, and under the leadership of a common king—I mean the breach between Judah and Ephraim, or as it is sometimes called, 'Israel.' Let us look at the history of that breach,

and then at the promise here given respecting it ; and may God so bless His word, that we may learn to cultivate more than ever a united, forbearing, and loving spirit !

I. The Breach.

This took place, as you remember, in the days of Rehoboam, 975 years before the coming of our Blessed Saviour. Now consider what a dreadful breach it was.

(1.) It was a breach in the nation chosen by God. No divisions do so much harm as those amongst the people of God.

Politicians may abuse each other if they please, and it does not much affect the Gospel. But Christians must not think of doing so, for they are set apart as witnesses for Christ, and all that they do affects the honour of their Lord. Now the disputants in this case were those of whom God had said, ‘ The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.’ (Deut. vii. 6.) But, notwithstanding His choice, they were rent asunder by division ; and, instead of being one, they were split into two hostile nations.

(2.) There was fault on both sides at the

commencement of the strife. Rehoboam was foolish, and Jeroboam wicked. On the one side was folly, and on the other rebellion. In almost all quarrels there is fault on both sides, and whenever a breach begins, all involved ought to consider whether they themselves may not be in some respects to blame.

(3.) It led to a series of bloody wars until the ten tribes were carried captive. For 250 years the two divisions of the nation were perpetually at strife, and thousands of homes must have been desolated by their sanguinary wars.

(4.) It led the ten tribes into open and avowed idolatry. As soon as the division took place, in order to prevent Israel returning to Jerusalem, Jeroboam set up two golden calves, one in Beth-el, and the other in Dan, and said, 'Behold thy gods, O Israel.' He rebelled not only against Judah, but against God.

(5.) It led to sinful alliances with idolatrous nations. In their contests against each other they called in the help of the surrounding heathen. Ephraim was allied with Syria, and Judah with Egypt. (Isa. xxx. 2).

Thus things went on growing worse and worse, till both parties utterly fell. First, the ten tribes were carried captive, and then after 115 years Judah followed. Their homes were broken up ; their temple was destroyed ; the land of the ten tribes was peopled with heathen from Babylon ; and Jerusalem, the city of David, the seat of Solomon's magnificence, the place of which David sang, ' Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion,' was laid low in the dust, her streets choked with rubbish, and her walls a heap of ruin.

How far the division has been since kept up it is very difficult to know. It seems most probable that some of both nations returned after the edict of Cyrus ; but not enough to constitute a reunion of the people. They certainly have never been united under one king of the family of David, and there has never been a union of the ten tribes with Judah in their own land, for in the days of our Lord that was occupied by the Samaritans, of whom it is said, ' The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.' So, according to the pro-

phetic Scriptures, it appears that they will be distinct from each other during the dispersion. In Isa. xi. 12, we read of the 'outcasts of Israel,' and 'the dispersed of Judah;' and it is one of the promises of the latter days that, 'The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.' So there is great reason to believe that they will be restored separately, Judah first, and afterwards Israel. In Zech. x. 6, it appears as if Judah would be restored first, for it is said that Judah will be strengthened, and Israel saved—that is, Judah, having been restored, will be strengthened; and Israel, being not yet restored, will be saved. 'And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them; and they shall be as though I had not cast them off; for I am the Lord their God, and will hear them.' So the description of the restoration in Zech. xii. clearly refers to Judah only.

If this be the case, the division still ex-

ists. Two thousand eight hundred and fifty years have passed since it began, and it has proved the truth of the words, 'The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water.' When great embankments have given way, it has generally been the result of some little leakage scarcely perceived by any one.' A little water has oozed through the bank, and the results have been in some cases the destruction of a whole valley. So it was with the strife between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. It was a little matter at the outset ; but the flood went on spreading and deepening, till it swept all before it ; till it ruined both kingdoms ; and desolated all the home interests, both of Judah and Israel. And now to the eye of man there appears not the slightest possibility of reunion. If any one were to desire to attempt it, he would not even know where to find the parties. They are as water spilt on the ground, and to bring them together in one would be as difficult as to collect in one vessel the shower of yesterday.

But this breach, though so sinful, so fatal in its consequences, and of such long

standing, will one day be healed ; and the time is coming when Judah and Israel will be made one nation in their own land as they were under David and Solomon. Let us turn then to the prophecy.

II. The Repair of the Breach.

In former days each tribe had a rod, or staff, on which its name was written, and which was laid up in the tabernacle of the congregation. (Numb. xvii. 2.) So now Ezekiel was directed to take two rods, or sticks, and write upon them the names of the two great divisions of the divided family ; on the one 'for Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions ;' and on the other 'for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions,' ver. 16. He was then to hold them together, and assured that they would become one in his hand. The two sticks or rods would be miraculously joined, so that the rod of Judah and the rod of Joseph, or Ephraim, would become in his hand one rod. This was to be done in the sight of the children of his people, and would of course excite their eager inquiry, and lead them to say, ' Wilt thou not show

us what thou meanest by these ? ' So God provided the prophet with his answer, and directed him to say unto them, ' Thus saith the Lord God ; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land : And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel ; and one king shall be king over them all : and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.'

I wish I had time to examine the whole of the magnificent prophecy that follows ; but I cannot in this lecture attempt more than the one subject of reunion. The passage confirms the lessons already learned, and carries us a step beyond them. We first found that Israel, by which I mean the whole seed of Jacob, were to be restored to their own land ; so here we read, ver. 21, ' Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land.' We then found that after their restoration

they would be converted, so here we read, ver. 24 : ' They all shall have one shepherd, and they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them ; ' and again in ver. 26 : ' I will make a covenant of peace with them ; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them ; and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for ever.' And now we go on a step further, and learn that the breach which has hitherto separated them, will be repaired, that the long-standing strife will be brought to an end, that the divisions will cease, that the idolatry will be abandoned, and that as a restored and reunited people they will enjoy the promise, ' They shall be My people, and I will be their God.' The passage also teaches us what will be the great bond of union. When our Lord spoke of the one flock in John, x. 16, He described it as united through its union with the one Shepherd, ' There shall be one flock, and one shepherd.' So now the twelve tribes will be united, not merely by national interest, or territorial boundary, but by a far higher bond of

union, their allegiance to one king. There will be one king, and all will acknowledge him. 'And one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations; neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.'

And now I come to a question of extreme difficulty, one in the discussion of which I should be sorry to speak too positively. **WHO IS THE KING?** Who is it that is about to reign over the whole nation, and under whose government all will be one? In answer to this question two things are perfectly clear. First, that the king is a descendent of David, ver. 24, 'And David my servant shall be king over them.' It does not necessarily mean that David himself will arise from the dead, but that the King will be of the house of David, and the heir to David's throne. Thus Rehoboam was called David at the outset of the rebellion, as in 1 Kings, xii. 16, 'So when all the people saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in

the son of Jesse : to your tents, O Israel ; now see to thine own house, David.'

Secondly, it is equally clear that our blessed Lord and Saviour is the Son of David as well as the Son of God, and that the throne is His whenever He sees fit to take it. You remember the great, grand Christmas prophecy, contained in Isa. ix. 6, 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given : and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace,' and the distinct and clear declaration in that prophecy that the throne of David is His, and that in His own time He will take possession. 'Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this,' ver. 7. It is perfectly clear, therefore, that the day will come when the Lord Jesus as the Son of David will reign in Mount Zion, and 'before his

ancients gloriously.' And I cannot doubt that the magnificent promises of this passage lead us on to that glorious period. This is indeed proved by the reference to it in Rev. xxi. 3. In that passage the 27th verse of this chapter appears to be actually quoted of the New Jerusalem. In Ezekiel we read, 'My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' In Revelation, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.' The glories of the new Jerusalem are therefore the ultimate fulfilment of the prophecy, and there can be no doubt that it is the Lord Himself who will there reign as King.

But the prophecy may point to two distinct periods in the history of the restored people, the one before, and the other after the attack from the north; and is it not after the attack from the north; and is it not possible that the solution of the question may be that in the first of these periods the king will be a merely human

descendant of David, but in the second our Lord Himself ? If this is the meaning of the prophecy, the latter portion of it, descriptive of the covenant of peace and of the tabernacle, would refer to the second period.

But I cannot help thinking that before that glorious day there will be a lower, and more exclusively Jewish, fulfilment. That passage, as explained by the quotation in the Revelation, carries us far beyond the literal return of any one nation to their own country ; but this, while it foreshadows the other, has a local and limited application. If this be the case, may not the king at first be some lineal descendant of David reigning in the first instance at Jerusalem ? This view of the passage is confirmed by the description of just such a prince in Ezekiel's vision of the temple, Ezek. xl. &c. So in the 12th chap. of Zechariah, the family of David, as well as the rest of the people, is humbled by the outpouring of the Spirit, which would plainly be impossible if David were the Lord himself : ' I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of

Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications.' But the evidence from Hosea is stronger still. In Hos. i. 11, we find Judah and Israel appointing themselves one head, which seems quite inconsistent with the idea that the head is the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. When the Lord appears to reign it will not be by the appointment of the people.

But, whoever is the king during the first period after the return, one thing is perfectly clear, viz., that the great, long-standing breach between Judah and Israel will be healed, healed completely, and healed for ever. When God grants restoration and conversion He will also grant reunion. When God pardons He will unite ; when He gathers His chosen people to Himself, He will at the same time bind them to each other ; and when He brings them under the government of one king, He will combine them as a united kingdom for His own service and His own glory.

And thus we are brought to the most important practical lesson, that all who belong to His kingdom now should be united to each other in obedience to His

will. He is not yet reigning in Zion, but His kingdom is begun, and He is reigning now in the hearts of His people. He has not yet repaired the breach between Judah and Ephraim, but there is another breach, greater, wider, and far more hopeless, and He has repaired that. There is a rent of chasm which none could pass, and none could close—the chasm between the sinner and God, and He has bridged that over by His precious blood. Israel's rebellion against David is not to be compared to our rebellion against God ; but yet He has so provided that that shall no longer prevent our return. He has carried on such a reconciling work that those who are far way are brought nigh, that those who are outcasts are brought home, that the banished are restored, and rebels forgiven, and a saved people gathered in around His throne.

And thus we may say of multitudes, 'The kingdom of God is within you.' They are within the kingdom, and the kingdom within them. Now if we are thus brought by His grace to be the children of the kingdom, and if we are

all brought as children of the kingdom near to the throne, are we not by that very fact brought near to each other ?

So long as Israel and Judah remain dispersed among the nations far away from Jerusalem the breach will remain, and they will still live disunited from each other. But when they are brought home they will be one. Just so it is, or rather should be, with ourselves. So long as we are unsaved, and far away from God, there is nothing to bind us together. There is a great deal to separate, but nothing to unite. But when the Lord Jesus reigns in the heart, then we are all brought into fellowship with God, and then we are not merely fellow-subjects in His kingdom, but brethren in His home. We all look up to Him as King, and more than that, all call Him Father. We can all unite as brethren in the one sacred prayer which He Himself has taught us, and say, ' Our Father Thy kingdom come.' How close then should be the bond of union ? What a sacred tie should bind together all those who can use the Lord's Prayer ? Can we call Him our Father, and pray

for His kingdom ? Then we are children in the same home ; we are sheltered under the same care, we are fed at the same table, we are subjects of the same King, and all because we have been redeemed by the same blood. So now let us endeavour to realise that we are one, and with one heart and one soul, in one bond of holy brotherhood let us seek to love, to help, and to strengthen each other as we live together, and work together with thankful hearts, rejoicing in our King.

VII.

THE ATTACK FROM THE
NORTH.

WHAT a wonderful thing is a thought! How little, and yet how powerful! It takes no time. It comes, no man can say from whence, and it goes no man can tell you whither. But during those few moments of its presence, it may prove sufficient to revolutionise a world. No one sees a thought, and our most intimate friends may be ignorant of its existence; but that little, quick, unseen thought, is as naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do as the movement of an army, or the roll of the ocean. We have a remarkable illustration of the acquaintance of our God with thoughts in this prophecy.

We have in the thirty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel the account of a thought—a thought not merely seen, but foreseen; a thought which, though it has not yet been thought, was foreseen and foretold 2400

years ago. This prophecy was written nearly 600 years before the birth of our blessed Saviour. It is addressed to a mighty prince, who will attack Jerusalem in the latter days, and it says to him : ' Things shall come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought.' These things have not yet come into his mind, but yet the thought was predicted in the days of Ezekiel. Verily God seeth not as we see, for we look at the outward appearance, and can only see that which is close at hand ; but He sees that which is within, as well as that which is outside, and to Him time makes no difference, so that twenty-four centuries have no effect on His vision.

If you study this chapter, you will see clearly that the result of this evil thought will be an invasion of Palestine ; and there will be three subjects deserving our careful study—the condition of the people when they are thus invaded ; the great prince invading them ; and the result of the invasion. May the Lord help us really to understand His word, and may He so prepare us by the power of that word that,

whenever the Lord comes, we may be able to meet Him with joy, and not with grief !

I. The condition of the people at the time of the invasion.

I need not waste time by proving that the land is Palestine, and the people Israel. I have heard some people say that the passage refers to England, because ours is a land of unwall'd villages ; but such an idea is not worth a thought for anyone who is content to abide by the plain language of the word of God. There cannot be a doubt that it refers to the mountains of Israel (ver. 8), and to the people of Israel (ver. 14). What, then, will be the condition of those mountains, and of that people at the time predicted ?

As for the mountains, they will have been recovered from their waste and desolate condition. In ver. 8 the attack is said to be made on ' the land brought back from the sword, gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste, but it is brought forth out of the nations.' So in ver. 12 the enemy is said to turn his hand ' upon the desolate places that are now inhabited,

making it perfectly clear that the invasion will be after the restoration, and after the recovery of the land now desolate through the misrule of the oppressor.

So with reference to the people it is perfectly clear that they are Israel after their restoration. In ver. 12 they are described as the people 'gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.'

It is also clear that in their own land they will be living under a sense of security. They are described in ver. 11 as being undisturbed by anxiety. The enemy will say, 'I will go up to the land of un-walled villages ; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.'

So also they will be prosperous. Security is essential to prosperity. The great reason for the present desolation of Palestine is that there is no such thing as security. Turkish misrule has destroyed all confidence, and the sense of distrust has blighted the land ; but with the return of confidence there will be a return of pros-

perity, so they are described in ver. 12 as having 'gotten cattle and goods;' and the enemy is tempted to this invasion by the desire to carry away 'silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil' (ver. 13). But I do not see before the invasion any evidence either of their conversion, or of the reign of their most blessed Saviour. I see no sign either of the everlasting covenant of peace, or of the rule of the Son of God. On the contrary, it appears from chap. xxxix. 7, that the display of His power in the overthrow of the invader will be the great outward means of the conversion of Israel, for there we read, 'So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel.' So in ver. 26 it appears that they will go on trespassing even after their restoration, for there we read of the 'trespasses, whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in the land, and none made them afraid;' and it does not appear that till after this ter-

rible crisis they will be really and finally converted to God. Thus you read, ver. 22, 'So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward,' and, ver. 29, 'Neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.'

If this be the case there is something very melancholy in the lesson taught us, for it confirms the truth already stated that the heart of stone will not be softened even by the mercies of restoration, but will retain its hardness until, when it is finally crushed by a tremendous trial, the Lord appears for the deliverance of His people. Then it is that Israel will listen to the loving voice of mercy, and by the power of the Holy Ghost the broken heart will find the balm of Gilead in a simple look on the pierced One.

II. And now for THE INVADER, the mighty prince into whose mind the thought shall enter. Who is he? and where is he to be found?

One thing is perfectly clear, viz., that he will come in immense force. Several na-

tions such as Persia and Ethiopia will be in alliance with him, and the invasion will be with overwhelming power, chap. xxxviii. 9, 'Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee.' And this force will consist to a great extent of cavalry, ver. 15: 'And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army.'

Another thing is perfectly clear, viz., that he will come from the north, ver. 15, 'And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee.' The same is taught us, chap. xxxix. 2: 'And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel.'

Now what are we to understand by the north? Of course we must take our standpoint from Jerusalem. We must not consider what is north of England, but

what is north of Jerusalem. Now if you look at the map you will see that the chief power of Turkey lies north of Jerusalem. If there were to be a renewed Turkish invasion, it would come against Jerusalem from the north. So far, therefore, as the north is concerned, the prophecy might be fulfilled by an invasion by the Turks.

But there is one great peculiarity in this prophecy, viz., that the prince is described as being the head of three races, and that of those races the names are given. According to the rendering in the margin of our Bibles, he is said in ver. 2 to be, 'the prince of the chief, of Meshech, and Tubal.' Now I never like to suggest an alteration in our dear old English version to which we are indebted for such infinite blessings; but it seems to be admitted by the best Hebrew scholars, that the word in Hebrew here rendered 'the chief,' should not have been translated at all, but have been left as a proper name. The word is 'Rosh,' so that the sentence stands thus, 'The prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal.'

I trust I may not speak rashly, or foist human theories on the prophetic word. But

there is something very remarkable in the mention by name of these three northern tribes, for they all three still exist with the actual names here mentioned in the prophecy, and are at this present day united under the government of one prince. First, there is 'Rosh,' an ancient tribe to the north of the Taurus, from which the great empire of the north has derived its modern name of 'Russia.' The second is 'Mesec,' the home of those who in former times was called the Moschi, and are now called the Muscovites, the people who have given its name to the city of Moscow. The two names, Moscow and Meshech, would be written in ancient Hebrew with exactly the same letters. And then there is Tubal, acknowledged by all who have investigated its history to be a northern, or Scythian, tribe, and now incorporated with the Russian and the Muscovite in the great Russian province of Tobolsk. I will not say more than that the coincidence of names is most extraordinary. It was a wonderful thing that Isaiah should predict Cyrus by name 150 years before he rose to power.

But it is still more wonderful if it shall prove that more than 2400 years ago, Ezekiel was employed to predict by name the present power of the Russian empire ; nay, more, should even predict a thought that should at some future day come into the mind of the Russian Ruler. Such a prophecy could never have come from any private interpretation or calculation, but the holy man of old must have spoken as he was moved by the Holy Ghost.

III. But we must hasten to THE RESULT.

The vast army will spread like a flood over the land. All hearts will tremble before it. No one apparently will resist except ' Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof.' (Ver. 13.) They appear to challenge the invader, though there is no sign of their showing fight. They try the power of diplomacy, and say, ' Art thou come to take a spoil ? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey ? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil ? ' Now why do these merchants of Tarshish take

so much interest in the safety of Israel ? I think the reason is explained in Isa. lx. 9 ; for there we read that the ships of Tarshish will have had the honour of being the first to convey the returning nation to Jerusalem, so that now they are very naturally standing by them after their return. But who are these merchants and young lions of Tarshish ? and to whom belong these ships ? I have no time to work out the subject, and can do no more than express the conviction that the ships of Tarshish are the ships of western Europe, trading outside the Straits of Gibraltar : and to add the fervent hope that the ships may prove to be the navy of England, and the young lions the bravest sons of her merchant princes.

Tartessus, or Tarshish, was a town at the mouth of the Guadalquivir, to the west of the Straits of Gibraltar. The ships of Tarshish carried ' silver, iron, tin, and lead ' (Ezek. xxvii. 12), with other produce from the western shores of Europe and Africa to Tartessus, from whence the Phenicians conveyed them in their ships to Tyre. Thus the ships of Tarshish were the

ocean-going ships of Western Europe.

But this I leave ; for according to the prophecy, their remonstrance is in vain. On comes the invader, sweeping over the land, spreading death and ruin in every direction, till at length he reaches Jerusalem itself, and, according to the corresponding prophecy in Zechariah, actually takes the city. Who can attempt to picture the terror, the agony, the despair, and the bitter disappointment, of such a time of unlooked-for calamity ? Were we not returned ? might Israel say. Were we not once more a thriving people ? Was not the country once more fertile and beautiful ? And now it is again destroyed, so that, after all our bright hopes, we are worse off than ever.

But no. The old proverb that ' Man's extremity is God's opportunity,' is true still. And though the merchants of Tarshish and the young lions thereof fail in beating back the foe, the Son of David can do it, and as the Son of God He will. So when all is despair, and when all hope is lost, there is a change, a mighty, marvellous change, and the Lord Himself appears.

He takes the kingdom, and they are safe. Look at the description given verses 18-20. There we see the conquering power, 'My presence.' Before His presence the whole earth shakes and the very mountains tremble. But what are we to understand by His presence? Does it mean His abiding presence with His people, the presence which we this day are enjoying? Surely it is something more than that. Let us turn to Zech. xiv. 3, 4, and there we shall see the explanation: 'Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east.' The real meaning therefore is, that the Lord Himself shall 'descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God,' 1 Thess. iv. 16; that He will no longer be unseen but seen; that in His human nature He will no longer be in heaven, but here. He ascended from the Mount of Olives and to the Mount of Olives He will return, and there in His divine omnipo-

tence, and exalted humanity, He will assert His sovereignty and save His people and fulfil His promise, 'The sun shall be ashamed, and the moon confounded when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and before his ancients gloriously.'

And now I have done with the Jews. There are many more things that I should like to say respecting them ; but we have reached a point from which we must look far beyond their limited and local interests. We are brought to the footstool of the Lord Himself, and all thoughts must be fixed on Him, on His coming, His kingdom, His triumph, and His everlasting glory. We must look at a far greater gathering than that of the Jews to Palestine, even the gathering of the whole of God's elect gathered from the north, and the south, and the east, and the west, before the throne of their Lord.

We must rejoice in the hope of a far greater victory than that over the invader of Judæa from the north, even over the final conquest of death and hell, and Satan himself, and the final rest of the whole multitude of God's elect. On that final

triumph all eyes should be fixed, for we little know how rapidly it is hurrying on. The one chief thought amongst us all should be, are we ourselves ready to meet Him? If we are, we may look forward full of hope, for the night is far spent and the day is at hand. If we are not, there is not one moment to be lost, and the earnest desire of every individual should be to know the atoning power of His redeeming blood that, whenever He comes, and in whatever manner, being pardoned through His blood and safe in His covenant, we may meet Him in a happy, peaceful, well-assured confidence, and be able to say without a fear, or a reason for fear, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus!'

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